

Message Text

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PAGE 01 YAOUND 00110 101746Z
ACTION AF-10

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R 101120Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4209

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 0110

STADIS////////

AF ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, CM
SUBJ: INQUIRIES ON BEHALF OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

REF: MEMO FROM AF/I DATED DECEMBER 15,1977

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED A SPATE OF COMMUNICATIONS FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (AI) REGARDING SPECIFIC CAMEROON CITIZENS ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN DETAINED IN JULY 1978 FOR DISTRIBUTING ANTI-GOVERNMENT TRACTS AND INQUIRY FROM AF/I CONCERNING SAMUEL ESSOUNGOU ALLEGEDLY DETAINED JANUARY 1977(REFMEMO). MOST AI REQUESTS INDICATE THEY HAVE ADDRESSED INQUIRIES TO GURC WITHOUT RESOONSE. INFORMATION SOUGHT INCLUDES CHARGES, PLACE OF IMPRISONMENT, RELEASE DATES, ETC.

2. WE HAVE IMFORMALLY RAISED MATTER WITH DEPUTY CHIEF OF PROTOCOL FRANCIS NKWAIN AND PRESIDENCY ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL BOUBA BELLO IN TERMS OF SEEKING THEIR ADVICE AND POINTING OUT OBVIOUS PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEMS RELEVANT TO GURC INTERESTS, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT OUR SECURITY ASSISTANCE REPOTING REQUIREMENTS. NKWAIN'S RESPONSE WAS THAT INQUIRIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO EITHER CAMEROON AMBASSADOR OR FOREIGN MINISTER. BELLO SAID WE SHOULD SEND NOTE TO FOREIGN
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MINISTRY AND BE GUIDED BY RESPONSE. FYI: DCM READ AI REPORT (FORWARDED WITH REF MEMO) ON ESSOUNGOU TO BOUBA BELLO, WHO SAID HE HAD NEVER HEARD OF ESSOUNGOU, WITH IMPLICATION THAT HE WOULD KNOW THE NAME IF HE WERE INDEED DETAINED.

3. PURSUANT TO NKWAIN'S ADVICE WE HAVE DRAFTED THE FOLLOW-
ING REPLY TO AI, WHICH, IF NO OBJECTION PERCEIVED, WE INTEND

TO USE IN RESPONSE TO PRESENT AND FUTURE INQUIRIES. QUOTE
IN YOUR LETTER OF INQUIRY YOU REFER TO THE DETAINMENT OF A
NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO DISTRIBUTED ANTI-GOVERNMENT TRACTS ON
BEHALF OF THE BANNED UNION DE POPULATIONS DE CAMEROON (UPC), WHICH
SPONSORED A PROLONGED ARMED INSURRECTION AGAINST THE CAMEROON
GOVERNMENT IN THE 1960S. AFTER CONSIDERABLE VIOLENCE THE
INSURRECTION WAS PUT DOWN. WHILE WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON
SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS, IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT MOST
OF THOSE ARRESTED IN 1976 SUBSEQUENTLY HAVE BEEN RELEASED.
THE GOVERNMENT OF CAMEROON HAS INDICATED THAT THE APPRO-
PRIATE PERSONS FOR FUTURE INQUIRY ARE:

H.E. JEAN KEUTCHA
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
YAOUNDÉ, UNITED REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

AMBASSADOR BENOIT BINDZI
EMBASSY OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
2349 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20008

I HOPE THAT THE ABOVE INFORMATION WILL BE HELPFUL. IF THERE
IS STILL NO SATISFACTION, I WOULD SUGGEST THAT YOU WRITE
TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION IN GENEVA OR THE LOCAL CHAPTER
OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IN CAMEROON. COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE. END
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QUOTE.

4. WE HAVE CHECKED WITH VARIOUS OTHER EMBASSIES CONCERNING
THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY HANDLE INQUIRIES OF THIS
NATURE. THE BRITISH AND SWISS IGNORE THEM. THE GERMANS
REFER THE LETTERS WITHOUT REPLY TO BONN WHERE THE FOREIGN
MINISTRY PREPARES A RESPONSE. THE CANADIANS REFER THE
INQUIRER TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND THE LOCAL AI
CHAPTER. THUS, OUR SUGGESTED RESPONSE GOES FURTHER THAN THOSE
OF OUR COLLEAGUES.

5. IN VIEW OF NKWAIN AND BELLO, NOTWITHSTANDING UNIVERSAL
DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD
TO QUESTIONS RAISED BY PRIVATE GROUPS IN U.S., EMBASSY HAS
NO STATUS WITH RESPECT CAMEROON CITIZENS. THEREFORE, WHILE
WE ARE PREPARED MAKE CIRCUMSPECT INFORMAL INQUIRIES ESPECIALLY
PURSUANT REFERENCED MEMO, WE HESITATE TO TAKE ACTION
INAPPROPRIATE FOR OUR EMBASSY WHICH COULD DAMAGE OUR GOOD
RELATIONS WHEN GURC LEARNS WE ARE QUOTE INTERFERING IN DOMESTIC
AFFAIRS UNQUOTE IF WE PRESS THE MATTER EVEN THROUGH PRIVATE
CHANNELS. THIS ESPECIALLY TRUE IF THERE ARE OTHER, MORE
APPROPRIATE CHANNELS AVAILABLE, AS INDICATED IN OUR DRAFT

LETTER ABOVE.

6. GURC HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD ONE OF BEST IN AFRICA, BUT GURC BELIEVES IT HAS RIGHT TO PROTECT ITSELF AGAINST PARTY DEDICATED TO ITS VIOLENT OVERTHROW. (WE UNDERSTAND AI GROUND RULTES REJECT VIOLENCE). THEREFORE, WE WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S EARLY GUIDANCE RE PROPER ROLE OF THE EMBASSY IN THESE MATTERS, BOTH WITH RESPECT TO QUESTIONS RAISED IN REFERENCED MEMO AND AI INQUIRIES.
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